

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 LENDING 01507 180824Z

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PER-01 ST-01 EB-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 COME-00

INT-05 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01 CIEP-01 FPC-01

H-02 L-03 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04 SAM-01 OES-06 SS-15

STR-04 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 /106 W  
----- 077670

R 180705Z SEP 76

FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2626

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LENINGRAD 1507

EO 11652N/A

TAGS: ENRG, PINT, UR

SUBJ: GASOLINE SHORTAGE IN LENINGRAD

1. THERE HAS BEEN A SHORTAGE OF GASOLINE IN THE LENINGRAD AREA FOR ABOUT A WEEK WHICH SEEMS TO BE GETTING INCREASINGLY SERIOUS. WE HAVE NOTED LONG LINES OF CARS IN THE PAST FEW DAYS AT PRINCIPAL LENINGRAD GASOLINE STATIONS AT ALL HOURS OF THE DAY, WHILE IN THE EARLIER PART OF THE WEEK QUEUES EXISTED PRIMARILY IN THE MORNING AND EVENING RUSH HOUR PERIODS. THERE ALSO IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT SOME STATIONS HAVE TEMPORARILY CLOSED FOR LACK OF GASOLINE. IN ONE CASE WE OBSERVED, A CLOSED GASOLINE STATION REMOVED ITS "REMONT" SIGN AND REOPENED TO THE PUBLIC IMMEDIATELY AFTER RECEIVING GASOLINE FROM A TANKER. A SOVIET INTERPRETOR ASSIGNED TO A VISITING AMERICAN GUEST ALSO TOLD US ON SEPT 16 THAT INTOURIST RENTAL CARS ARE ONLY BEING ALLOTTED A HALF TANK OF GASOLINE.

2. CONSULATE GENERAL CARS WHICH ARE ALWAYS GIVEN FRONT-OF-THE-LINE PRIORITY ARE STILL BEING GASSED UP WITHOUT PROBLEMS BUT NOW ARE RECEIVING 93 OCTANE RATHER THAN NORMAL 95 OCTANE GASOLINE, AND WE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT OCTANES LOWER THAN 93 ARE UNAVAILABLE.

TEMPERS ARE HIGH AMONG SOVIET DRIVERS WAITING IN LINE AND LINE JUMPING BY SOVIET MAKE CARS WITH DIPLOMATIC TAGS IN A NUMBER OF CASES HAS DRAWN HOSTILE REACTIONS FROM THE WAITING CROWDS UNTIL THE DIPLOMATIC NATURE OF THE OWNER COULD BE CLARIFIED. PROBABLY FOR CROWD CONTROL REASONS, WE NOTED THAT POLICE OFFICERS WERE BEING ASSIGNED THIS MORNING TO SOME MAJOR GASOLINE STATIONS.

3. COMMENT: WE ARE AT A LOSS TO EXPLAIN THE REASONS FOR THIS SUDDEN SHORTAGE WHICH ONE LOCAL EMPLOYEE TELLS US IS THE FIRST SUCH EXTENDED GASOLINE SHORTAGE IN LENINGRAD IN RECENT MEMORY. THERE ARE NO GASOLINE STORAGE TANKS FOR GENERAL USE IN LENINGRAD PORT AND LENINGRAD REPORTEDLY RECEIVES ITS GASOLINE FROM THE MAJOR REFINERY AT KIRISHI, WHICH SERVES THE ENTIRE NORTHWEST ECONOMIC REGION. A CONSULAR CORPS GROUP VISITING KIRISHI SEVERAL YEARS AGO WAS TOLD THAT THE REFINERY'S PRODUCTS ARE PREDOMINANTLY TRANSPORTED TO THEIR DESTINATIONS BY RAIL, WITH ONLY A LIMITED AMOUNT GOING BY TRUCK. THUS, IF THE CURRENT SHORTAGE IS DUE TO A BREAKDOWN IN THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM, THE PROBLEM MAY LIE WITH THE RAILROADS.

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